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SUBJECT: NGO AGRICULTURAL RECOVERY

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

1. (SBU) Summary: US Embassy and USAID/Zimbabwe recommend OFDA approval of three non-food humanitarian assistance proposals submitted by CARE, CRS, and World Vision. Post does not believe that targeted beneficiaries - communal farmers - should be the primary focus of humanitarian assistance in Zimbabwe; however, these programs are very small in scope, will not have a significant policy impact, and can be mobilized quickly to assist approximately 80,000 deserving families severely affected by the food crisis in Zimbabwe. Post remains convinced that the swelling number of IDPs - principally commercial farm workers and their families displaced by the chaotic land reform program - should be the major focus of OFDA recovery programs in Zimbabwe. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The primary USG response to the current complex food crisis in Zimbabwe has been to provide food for direct distribution to the most needy people through a major contribution to the World Food Program relief effort and

through a separate food distribution program with World Vision. There is general agreement in the donor community that the current crisis will continue until farmers revive agricultural production. Current GOZ policies continue to be the major constraint to that effort. Nonetheless, post believes that a small agricultural recovery program carefully targeted to the most vulnerable families in communal areas is worthy of support and will not adversely affect the broader policy environment.

3. (SBU) Three US NGOs have submitted proposals to develop agricultural recovery programs in support of the USG effort to respond to the complex food crisis in Zimbabwe: CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and World Vision International (WVI). The combined programs would provide seed inputs for approximately 80,000 established communal area farmers that are the most destitute and who are expected to benefit the least from any government assistance. They will be coordinated with both existing and proposed food distribution and feeding programs. The programs will provide inputs to allow for agriculture production at a subsistence level for the most vulnerable families in the communal areas (e.g., women and child-headed households, families affected by chronic illness).

4. (SBU) Seeds will consist of locally purchased, drought-tolerant packages of maize, sorghum, millet, cowpeas and black-eyed-beans, where/as appropriate. The duration of each program would be approximately 6 months. The US NGOs would target established communal area farmers who have the capability to farm, but no finances; women or child-headed households; families severely affected from chronic illness (e.g., HIV/AIDS, TB, cancer); the elderly and disabled; and those who lost their crops in 2002. All beneficiaries would have to have access to land and be able to farm to be considered for the program.

5. (SBU) Each of the US NGOs would work in districts where they currently have programs operating. These would include districts in the provinces of Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Masvingo, and Midlands.

6. (SBU) The proposed OFDA contribution would be: CARE US\$600,000; CRS US\$1,100,000 (includes US\$500,000 for health/feeding interventions for approximately 150,000 people); and WVI US\$500,000.

7. (SBU) Post believes that any agricultural recovery program must take into consideration how much can be accomplished in the current environment of counterproductive macroeconomic and agriculture sector policies. Post also believes that an agricultural recovery program could operate to shield the GOZ from the harsh effects of its bad policies and, therefore, provide a disincentive for the GOZ to fix the underlying causes of low agricultural production.

18. (SBU) Even taking these concerns into consideration, however, post recommends that this small-scale intervention be approved. These programs are targeted at providing subsistence-level production for the most vulnerable families, and will not work with farmers whose activities have an impact on overall agricultural production levels. Also, because it is modest in scale, the intervention is not expected to have an impact - positive or negative - on the economic policy environment in the agriculture sector, which impedes increased agricultural production. Nonetheless, these small-scale programs will mitigate the humanitarian crisis by reducing the number of vulnerable people next season who require emergency food assistance.

19. (SBU) Finally, post continues to be concerned about the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), who are primarily displaced black farm workers. IDPs have suffered directly from the GOZ's fast-track land resettlement program and do not typically have communal structures in place to support them, as do farmers residing in communal areas. It is also estimated that the number of IDPs could reach nearly 2 million people by the end of the year. For these reasons, post believes that the IDP situation should be the highest priority for humanitarian resources as the next step in USG assistance. During his July 21-23 visit to Zimbabwe, USAID Assistant Administrator/DCHA Roger Winter indicated that USAID/Washington would discuss the IDP issue with UN/OCHA and encourage OCHA to urgently develop a program to respond to their plight. Post recommends that USAID/Washington continue these discussions and advise post on progress. SULLIVAN